CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 50 – A Look Backward and Forward

1.A Look Backward

a.In Philippians 3:12-14 Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

b.The Church can make these words of Paul its own. Its service has not been perfect, for it is composed of sinners in a sinful world. The Church is not of the world, but it is very much the world. It has greatly influenced the world; it has been a salt and a savor. But the world has at all times also profoundly influenced the Church. At times the salt has almost lost its savor, and frequently the light has been dimmed.

c.From the very beginning the Jews have been the bitter opponents of the Church. The Muslims have conquered much territory over which the banner of the cross once flew. The Church so far has not been able to win over many of these opponents.

d.The Church has never been overpowered. It did not prevent the fall of the Roman Empire, but it brought within its fold the Germanic tribes which destroyed that empire. At times the Church has sunk into error, superstition, corruption, and indifference. But the divine life which is in the Church has always preserved and revived it. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Systems of political and social organization have appeared and vanished. As century after century has rolled by, man's ways of living have undergone countless changes. But the Church, under God, has survived.

2.A Look Forward

a.Together we have traveled nearly two thousand miles of the long road of the Church's history. The road will continue on. Today we behold the strange spectacle, cause for sorrow and joy, of many in the Church repudiating the Gospel while others in the far corners of the earth are accepting it. From Scripture we know that dark days are in store for the Church and for the world. Black clouds are even now rising in the sky. But we know that the Church will continue upon its career of conquest until the return of our Lord. For the Church is the army of Christ. Jesus Christ is the living Head and the great King of the Church.

b.You have studied the history of the Christian Church. But you must do more. You must help make that history from now on, be your part ever so small. In the bitter warfare that lies ahead, and as the battle mounts, you must prove yourselves loyal and valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ. Help to make the future history of the Church even more glorious than its past.